

COT: A Resident's Perspective

What I Wish I Had Known About COT

One of my main concerns about joining the Air Force was the Commissioned Officer Training (COT) program. With a little preparation, COT can be a rewarding experience. I recommend you learn as much as you can about COT before you arrive. It is very helpful to read the COT web page (<http://ots.afoats.af.mil/>) several weeks before arriving. One of the links is the Operating Instructions (OIs). This booklet details basic rules about daily life at COT: customs, courtesies, how to ask a question, uniforms, Honor Code, etc.

Most of your time on the first day will be spent in line for uniform purchases. Previous students have recommended that you purchase uniforms prior to arrival. If you do so, be sure to have your recruiter help you with the purchases and refer to the website for the clothing list. However, I recommend you wait on buying exercise gear because these items vary from base to base. Although purchasing clothing in advance can be helpful (particularly if your size is out of stock), you still have to spend some time waiting in lines.

The website recommends you have access to \$1,500 on the first day for uniform purchases. Expect to pay between \$900-\$1000 for uniforms, \$300 for food (\$2-3 per meal), and \$100 in incidentals during the one month at COT. Because of computer update deadlines, you may not receive pay on the first payday, and you should plan accordingly. I recommend you have a credit card, checking account/check book and \$300 cash. The checking account provides access to funds, and you will need a deposit slip of your account to have your military pay directly deposited into your checking account. A calling card is helpful or a cell phone with "free long distance".

You are required to stay in the dorm room provided. It is a single room and is equipped with a bed, recliner, desk and chair, microwave oven, cable TV, refrigerator, and linens. The bathroom is shared with one of your neighbors. There is a small convenience store and barbershop within walking distance.

The Monday through Friday routine is the same: march to physical conditioning (PC) at 0500 (if you already have a work-out routine, you may be disappointed that PC isn't more rigorous), return to your room for breakfast, go to class, march to lunch, return to class, and march to dinner at 1700 (5:00 P.M.). There are no scheduled activities for the evenings. I usually spent the evenings reading for the next day's class, ironing my uniform, shining my boots, and talking on the phone with my fiancé.

Perhaps the worst thing for me was being away from friends and family. However, you quickly make friends at COT. On the weekends we played golf, swam, went out to eat, went to movies, read for our classes, and caught up on sleep.

Although I had my car, it is not necessary. You will walk/march to all of your classes from the dorm room. If any of the activities take you away from the area, you will be required to ride the COT buses. I did find it convenient on weekends, but not required, as there are many other people with their own vehicles.

Something new for me was I had to follow the rules, directions and whims of the Flight Training Officers and other leaders. However, I soon realized that these rules served to sharpen my inner discipline, build teamwork, and develop an understanding of the military environment. COT can be a positive learning experience if it is approached with the right attitude... being open-minded and flexible as you make the transition in becoming an Air Force officer and dentist.